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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 0544
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0342

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VIENNA 001552

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/07/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNSC](#) [KPKO](#) [IR](#) [AF](#) [AU](#)
SUBJECT: BRIMMER IN VIENNA: AUSTRIANS CLAIM TO BE WITHIN
EUROPE'S MAINSTREAM ON IRAN

REF: VIENNA 1514

Classified By: Economic/Political Counselor Dean Yap for reasons 1.4 (b)
) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Austrian MFA Political Director Lehne maintained Austria's position on sanctions against Iran was "well in the mainstream of Europe." We have since gone back to Lehne and others to review reports that indicate Austria is among the EU's Iran sanctions skeptics, and to urge preparatory work now within the EU as well as a strong political signal at Wednesday's EU council. In discussing multilateral issues with IO A/S, he said he was perplexed at Iran's lack of response to peaceful overtures on its nuclear program and he reiterated Austria's preference for sanctions through the UNSC. Lehne also said Austria supported renewal of the Congo mandate, but thought there were neither resources nor will among troop providers for a robust mandate. Austria would work as 1267 Al-Qaeda/Taliban Sanctions Committee Chair to bring the process into a form more acceptable for the public and the European Court. At a separate meeting, Chancellery foreign policy advisor Meindl said that Austria "clearly understood" the need for more effort on Afghanistan. End summary.

A/S Brimmer Visits the MFA

¶2. (C) On November 30 Assistant Secretary for International Organization Affairs Esther Brimmer met with Stefan Lehne, MFA Political Director, to discuss Iran sanctions, the Security Council, and multi-lateral issues. Also attending the meeting were MFA Director for International Organizations Peter Huber, MFA Deputy Director of the Near and Middle East Department Christoph Meran, IO DAS Nerissa Cook, Ambassador Eacho, and Econpoloff (notetaker). A/S Brimmer began the meeting by thanking Lehne for Austria's successful chairmanship of the UNSC in November and its passage of a resolution on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict. Turning to Iran, A/S Brimmer asked about Austria's stance regarding sanctions against Iran, particularly in light of the recent IAEA resolution and Iran's general unwillingness to respond to peaceful overtures.

Austria's Position Misunderstood, Lehne Insists

¶3. (C) Lehne thanked A/S Brimmer for U.S. support on its UNSC resolution and its general cooperation during its chairmanship. On Iran, he noted, somewhat nervously, that there was apparently a "misunderstanding" of the Austrian position, in that Austria was somehow in opposition to sanctions. Lehne said that the Hungarian government had contacted his office and informed him that a U.S. delegation had expressed to them concern about Austria and its willingness to cooperate on sanctions. Lehne said he did not understand why anyone had concerns about Austria, insisting that its position was well "within the mainstream of Europe,"

and he professed himself disappointed at Iran's lack of response.

14. (C) Lehne stated that Austria had supported dual-track approach, leaving sanctions as an option. He applauded the Obama administration's "outstretched hand," and said it was a shame that Iran had not responded in kind. However, he reiterated Austria's strong preference that any sanctions regime pass through the UNSC, arguing that any process outside of that body would allow the Russians and Chinese to benefit. He also stated that Austria wanted dialogue to continue even with a sanctions regime in place, and suggested that, with Iran's internal problems, a more successful tack would be to encourage the leadership to engage, and he praised the offer of enriching fuel for the Tehran Research Reactor as an "ingenious idea."

15. (C) We have since followed up, with Ambassador Eacho discussing Iran again with Lehne, noting multiple reports from other Europeans that Austria is among the small group of EU governments keeping the brakes on regarding EU preparations for Iran sanctions in case the UNSC does not approve them. DCM had a similar talk with Chancellery foreign policy advisor Juergen Meindl December 3, we have held working-level discussions and at least one recent press article reported pressure from the UK and France on Austria about Iran. The Austrians expressed concern that sanctions not benefit Revolutionary Guard and other reactionary forces, who stand to profit from smuggling. We emphasized the need to address these issues now in EU deliberations, to avoid rushing new non-UN sanctions if needed and keep the pressure on Tehran. The Austrians indicated they would support a

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strong political signal from EU heads of government at their December 10 meeting.

Other UNSC Issues: Afghanistan, DRC, 1267

16. (C) In a dinner with A/S Brimmer that evening, Meindl said Austria "clearly understood" the U.S. wants it to increase its effort on Afghanistan.

17. (C) A/S Brimmer asked Lehne for his opinion on the renewal of the UN mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC). Although Austria would support renewal, Lehne felt that the broad mandate was too difficult to carry out. Huber added that the MFA was in close contact with the French regarding a renewal of MONUC, but he saw the size of the force as inadequate for the large area and believed this mismatch of resources was preventing effective work. Lehne added that he saw a contradiction when ambitious mandates were established for peacekeeping forces, but the peacekeeper donor countries were not entirely willing to fulfill such mandates, e.g. Bangladesh. However, Lehne praised President Obama's decision to meet with the top ten peacekeeping contributor nations, saying it made a highly favorable impression.

18. (C) On the 1267 Al-Qaeda/Taliban sanctions committee, A/S Brimmer thanked Austria for its work as Chair and said the U.S. would welcome suggestions on delisting and finding a way forward on the sanctions process. A/S Brimmer noted that the Ombudsman idea could be a way forward. Lehne remarked that since the European Court had ruled against the 1267 process, Austria would work to develop a procedure more acceptable to the court. Huber added that there was public pressure on the legislators to mandate a new system immediately, but he believed the UNSC could work to convince the public and the courts that change to the process could come gradually.

Discussion on the EU and Kosovo

19. (C) Turning from UNSC issues, A/S Brimmer asked Lehne for

his assessment on the impact the Lisbon treaty would have on the Foreign Ministry. Lehne acknowledged that the changes were somewhat radical, and predicted that real change would occur during the second EU presidency of 2010. The Ambassador thanked Lehne for Austria's decision to submit a portfolio on Kosovo to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), as well as Austria's assuming leadership of EUFOR and its overall continued engagement in the Balkans region. Lehne, a Balkans expert, predicted that the situation will remain fragile, but he remained optimistic that after the ICJ decision the Serbs and Kosovars would come to an understanding.

¶10. (U) A/S Brimmer cleared this message in draft.
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